

The Magistrate and " Divine Vengeance." 151

camp making new slaughter? How is it that David, who through his whole life showed so much mildness, almost with his last breath leaves with his son the bloody testament not to allow the grey hairs of Joab and Shimei to go to the grave in peace? Both by their sternness sanctified the hands which they would have polluted by showing mercy, inasmuch as they executed the vengeance committed to them by God." This divine " vengeance" is only too evidently a trait in the stem character of the writer, though he warns against "an unseasonable severity " as well as against a misplaced clemency. He applies it to opinions as well as to actions, and covers the most atrocious inhumanity, in the case of Moses, with the pretext of " the divine authority." In this he shows himself as fanatic and furious a persecutor on principle as a Dominic. In defence of the faith the State must execute the will of God, *i.e.*, of the theologian who claims a monopoly of its interpretation. " I wish it could always be present to our mind that nothing is done here by the rashness of man, but all in obedience to the authority of God. When it is the guide, we never stray from the right path, unless indeed divine justice is to be placed under restraint and not allowed to take punishment on error/" A very " rash " assertion, to say the least, considering the proneness of the human mind to mistake its own passions for divine justice, its own tyrannic impulses for the authority of God.

Apart from the dangerous attribution to the State of the right to use compulsion in the service of the Church, Calvin seeks to guard, by at least moral restraint, against the abuse of power. Taxation is a legitimate source of revenue to princes, but they should remember " that taxes are not so much privileged chests as treasuries of the whole people which they cannot without manifest injustice squander or dilapidate. . . . They should also consider that these levies and contributions, and other kind of taxes, are merely subsidies of the public necessity, and that it is tyrannical rapacity to harass the poor people with them without cause." He does not, however, go the length of recognising the right of resistance to misgovernment, but contents himself with threatening princes- with " the divine displeasure." " Private individuals may not rashly and petulantly stigmatise the